



CLEP[®]

Official Study Guide

16th Edition

American Government

College-Level Examination Program[®]

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American Government

Description of the Examination

The American Government examination covers material that is usually taught in a one-semester introductory course in American government and politics at the college level. The scope and emphasis of the exam reflect what is most commonly taught in introductory American Government courses that emphasize national government. The exam covers topics such as the institutions and policy processes of the federal government, the federal courts and civil liberties, political parties and interest groups, political beliefs and behavior, and the content and history of the Constitution.

The examination contains 100 questions to be answered in 90 minutes. Some of these are pretest questions that will not be scored. Any time candidates spend on tutorials and providing personal information is in addition to the actual testing time.

Knowledge and Skills Required

Questions on the American Government examination require candidates to demonstrate one or more of the following abilities in the approximate proportions indicated:

- Knowledge of American government and politics (about 55–60% of the exam)
- Understanding of typical patterns of political processes and behavior (including the components of the behavioral situation of a political actor), the principles used to explain or justify various governmental structures and procedures (about 30–35% of the exam)
- Analysis and interpretation of simple data that are relevant to American government and politics (10–15% of the exam)

The subject matter of the American Government examination is drawn from the following topics. The percentages next to the main topics indicate the approximate percentages of exam questions on those topics.

30–35% Institutions and policy processes: presidency, bureaucracy, and congress

- The major formal and informal institutional arrangements and powers

- Structure, policy processes, and outputs
- Relationships among these three institutions and links between them and political parties, interest groups, the media, and public opinion

15–20% Federal courts, civil liberties, and civil rights

- Structure and processes of the judicial system with emphasis on the role and influence of the Supreme Court
- The development of civil rights and civil liberties by judicial interpretation
- The Bill of Rights
- Incorporation of the Bill of Rights
- Equal protection and due process

15–20% Political parties and interest groups

- Political parties (including their function, organization, mobilization, historical development, and effects on the political process)
- Interest groups (including the variety of activities they typically undertake and their effects on the political process)
- Elections (including the electoral process)

10–15% Political beliefs and behavior

- Processes by which citizens learn about politics
- Political participation (including voting behavior)
- Public opinion
- Beliefs that citizens hold about their government and its leaders
- Political culture (the variety of factors that predispose citizens to differ from one another in terms of their political perceptions, values, attitudes, and activities)
- The influence of public opinion on political leaders

15–20% Constitutional underpinnings of American democracy

The development of concepts such as:

- Federalism (with attention to intergovernmental relations)
- Separation of powers
- Checks and balances
- Majority rule
- Minority rights
- Considerations that influenced the formulation and adoption of the Constitution
- Theories of democracy

Sample Test Questions

The following questions are provided to give an indication of the types of questions that appear on the American Government examination. CLEP examinations are designed so that average students completing a course in the subject can usually answer about half the questions correctly.

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements below is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case.

1. Which of the following statements best reflects the pluralist theory of American politics?
 - (A) American politics is dominated by a small elite.
 - (B) Public policies emerge from cooperation among elites in business, labor, and government.
 - (C) Public policies emerge from compromises reached among competing groups.
 - (D) American politics is dominated by cities at the expense of rural areas.
 - (E) The American political arena is made up of isolated individuals who have few group affiliations outside the family.

2. Which of the following is the most significant influence on an individual's identification with a particular political party?
 - (A) Religious affiliation
 - (B) Family
 - (C) Level of education
 - (D) Television
 - (E) The party identification of the incumbent President
3. Which of the following committee assignments would confer the most power and influence on members of the House of Representatives?
 - (A) Agriculture
 - (B) Ways and Means
 - (C) Veterans' Affairs
 - (D) Armed Services
 - (E) Education and Labor
4. Which of the following statements about *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* is correct?
 - (A) It declared segregation by race in the public schools unconstitutional.
 - (B) It established the principle of one person, one vote.
 - (C) It required that citizens about to be arrested be read a statement concerning their right to remain silent.
 - (D) It declared Bible reading in the public schools unconstitutional.
 - (E) It declared segregation by race in places of public accommodation unconstitutional.
5. Prior to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, literacy tests were used by some southern states to
 - (A) determine the educational achievement of potential voters
 - (B) prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote
 - (C) assess the general population's understanding of the Constitution
 - (D) hinder the migration of northerners
 - (E) defend the practice of segregation

6. A President who defers the selection of district court judges to the senators from the states in which the vacancy occurs is practicing
 - (A) logrolling
 - (B) preferential treatment
 - (C) senatorial prerogative
 - (D) senatorial courtesy
 - (E) judicial selection
7. Differences between House and Senate versions of a bill are resolved
 - (A) in a conference committee
 - (B) by the rules committees of both chambers
 - (C) in subcommittee hearings
 - (D) by the President before the bill is signed into law
 - (E) during the bill's markup phase
8. Which of the following principles protects a citizen from imprisonment without trial?
 - (A) Representative government
 - (B) Separation of powers
 - (C) Due process
 - (D) Checks and balances
 - (E) Popular sovereignty
9. The passage of legislation in Congress often depends on mutual accommodations among members. This suggests that, to some extent, congressional behavior is based on
 - (A) ideological divisions
 - (B) partisan division
 - (C) the principle of reciprocity
 - (D) deference to state legislatures
 - (E) norms of seniority
10. Which of the following statements accurately describes the President's veto power?
 - I. A President sometimes threatens to veto a bill that is under discussion in order to influence congressional decision making.
 - II. A President typically vetoes about a third of the bills passed by Congress.
 - III. Congress is usually unable to override a President's veto.
 - (A) I only
 - (B) III only
 - (C) I and III only
 - (D) II and III only
 - (E) I, II, and III
11. All of the following issues were decided at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 EXCEPT
 - (A) representation in the legislature
 - (B) voting qualifications of the electorate
 - (C) the method of electing the President
 - (D) congressional power to override a presidential veto
 - (E) qualifications for members of the House and Senate
12. Which of the following statements about political action committees (PAC's) is true?
 - (A) PAC's may give unlimited contributions to the election campaigns of individual candidates.
 - (B) PAC spending has not kept pace with inflation.
 - (C) PAC activity is limited to direct contributions to political parties.
 - (D) Social-issue groups are the source of most PAC dollars.
 - (E) PAC's are more likely to support an incumbent candidate than a challenger, regardless of the incumbent's party affiliation.

13. The usefulness to the President of having cabinet members as political advisers is undermined by the fact that
- (A) the President has little latitude in choosing cabinet members
 - (B) cabinet members have no political support independent of the President
 - (C) cabinet members are usually drawn from Congress and retain loyalties to Congress
 - (D) the loyalties of cabinet members are often divided between loyalty to the President and loyalty to their own executive departments
 - (E) the cabinet operates as a collective unit and individual members have no access to the President
14. All of the following are constitutional rights EXCEPT the right to
- (A) remain silent during questioning
 - (B) be represented by counsel
 - (C) be indicted by grand jury
 - (D) be informed of the charges pending
 - (E) receive a trial by jury in a criminal case
15. In the electoral history of the United States, third parties have been effective vehicles of protest when they
- (A) aligned themselves with one of the major parties
 - (B) presented innovative programs in Congress
 - (C) dramatized issues and positions that were being ignored by the major parties
 - (D) chose the President by depriving either of the major parties of an electoral college victory
 - (E) supported a political agenda that appealed especially to women
16. Which of the following best defines the term “judicial activism”?
- (A) The tendency of judges to hear large numbers of cases on social issues
 - (B) The efforts of judges to lobby Congress for funds
 - (C) The unwillingness of judges to remove themselves from cases in which they have a personal interest
 - (D) The attempts by judges to influence election outcomes
 - (E) The attempts by judges to influence public policy through their case decisions
17. High levels of political participation have been found to be positively associated with which of the following?
- I. A high level of interest in politics
 - II. A sense of political efficacy
 - III. A strong sense of civic duty
- (A) III only
 - (B) I and II only
 - (C) I and III only
 - (D) II and III only
 - (E) I, II, and III
18. In the last thirty years, the single most important variable in determining the outcome of an election for a member of the House of Representatives has been
- (A) incumbency
 - (B) personal wealth
 - (C) previous political office held in the district
 - (D) membership in the political party of the President
 - (E) positions on key social issues

19. Which of the following best describes the concept of federalism embodied in the United States government?
- (A) The constitution divides power between a central government and its constituent governments, with some powers being shared.
 - (B) The constitution grants all governmental powers to the central government, which may delegate authority to state governments.
 - (C) State governments join together and form a central government, which exists solely by approval of the state governments.
 - (D) The central government creates state governments.
 - (E) State governments are sovereign in all matters except foreign policy, which is reserved to the central government.
20. The power of the Rules Committee in the House of Representatives primarily stems from its authority to
- (A) choose the chairs of other standing committees and issue rules for the selection of subcommittee chairs
 - (B) initiate all spending legislation and hold budget hearings
 - (C) limit the time for debate and determine whether amendments to a bill can be considered
 - (D) determine the procedures by which nominations by the President will be approved by the House
 - (E) choose the President if no candidate wins a majority in the electoral college
21. Which of the following is a function of the White House Office?
- (A) Advising the President on policy decisions
 - (B) Heading federal departments as the President's representative
 - (C) Preparing the national budget for the President
 - (D) Supervising national security agencies such as the CIA and FBI
 - (E) Acting as a liaison between the Vice President and Congress
22. A major difference between political parties and interest groups is that interest groups generally do NOT
- (A) suggest new legislation that is supportive of their interests
 - (B) try to influence the outcome of legislation
 - (C) occupy a place on the ballot
 - (D) concern themselves with elections
 - (E) have a national organization
23. An election is a "realigning" or "critical" election if
- (A) one party controls the Congress and the other controls the presidency
 - (B) voter turnout is higher than expected
 - (C) it occurs during a major war
 - (D) there is a lasting change in party coalitions
 - (E) the same party controls both Congress and the presidency
24. Which of the following Supreme Court cases involved the principle of "one person, one vote"?
- (A) *Baker v. Carr*
 - (B) *Roe v. Wade*
 - (C) *Mapp v. Ohio*
 - (D) *Korematsu v. United States*
 - (E) *Gideon v. Wainwright*
25. The passage of broad legislation that leaves the making of specific rules to the executive branch is an example of
- (A) shared powers
 - (B) delegated authority
 - (C) checks and balances
 - (D) executive agreement
 - (E) a legislative veto

26. The redrawing of congressional districts in such a way as to give special advantage to one political party is referred to as

- (A) electioneering
- (B) gerrymandering
- (C) logrolling
- (D) apportionment
- (E) politicization

27. The details of legislation are usually worked out in which of the following settings?

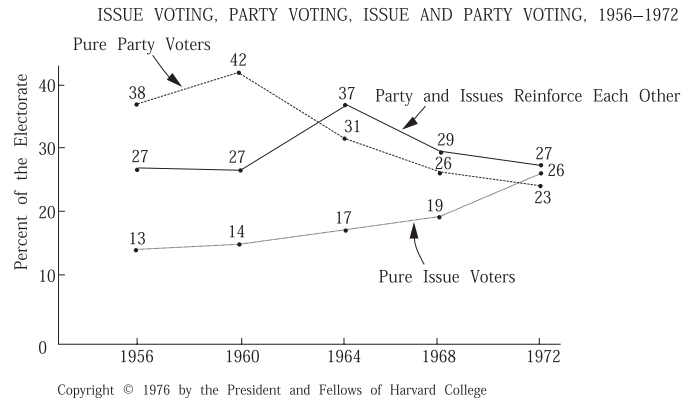
- (A) A party caucus
- (B) The majority leader's office
- (C) The floor of the House
- (D) Legislative hearings
- (E) A subcommittee

28. A theoretical explanation of the operation of diverse interests in American politics is found in

- (A) the Virginia Plan
- (B) John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*
- (C) *The Federalist*
- (D) the Declaration of Independence
- (E) John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*

29. Which of the following best describes the jurisdiction that the Constitution gives to the Supreme Court?

- (A) Much original jurisdiction and little appellate jurisdiction
- (B) Much original jurisdiction and no appellate jurisdiction
- (C) Little original jurisdiction and much appellate jurisdiction
- (D) No original jurisdiction and much appellate jurisdiction
- (E) No original jurisdiction and little appellate jurisdiction



30. According to the information in the chart above, which of the following statements are true?

- I. The proportion of pure issue voters in the electorate increased continuously between 1956 and 1972.
- II. The proportion of pure party voters in the electorate decreased continuously between 1956 and 1972.
- III. The net change in the proportion of the electorate for which party and issues reinforce each other was zero between 1956 and 1972.
- IV. In 1956, compared to the number of pure issue voters, there were about twice as many voters for whom party and issues reinforced each other, and about three times as many pure party voters.

- (A) I and II only
- (B) III and IV only
- (C) I, II, and III only
- (D) I, III, and IV only
- (E) I, II, III, and IV

31. Which of the following activities of American labor unions is permissible by law?

- (A) Engaging in strikes
- (B) Denying the public access to a business
- (C) Refusing a subpoena to appear before Congress
- (D) Disobeying a court injunction to return to work
- (E) Requiring members to make political contributions

32. Which of the following best describes the relationship between socioeconomic status and participation in politics?

- (A) The lower one's socioeconomic status, the more likely it is that one will run for public office.
- (B) The higher one's socioeconomic status, the greater the probability of active involvement in the political process.
- (C) Adults who are unemployed have a greater personal interest in policy and tend to participate more actively in politics than do employed adults.
- (D) People in the lower socioeconomic status are the most likely to vote.
- (E) There is no relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation.

STUDENT PARTY IDENTIFICATION BY
PARENT PARTY IDENTIFICATION

Student Party <u>Identification</u>	Parent Party Identification		
	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Independent</u>	<u>Republican</u>
Democrat	66%	29%	13%
Independent	27%	53%	36%
Republican	7%	18%	51%
Total	100%	100%	100%

M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence: The Influence of Families and Schools*. Copyright © 1974 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

33. According to the information in the table above, which of the following statements is correct?

- (A) Students who identify themselves as independents are most likely to have parents who are Republicans.
- (B) Of the three groups of parents, the Democrats are the most likely to pass on their party identification to their children.
- (C) Students who identify with the Democratic Party are more likely to have parents who are Republicans than parents who are independents.
- (D) The children of Republicans are less likely to identify themselves as independents than are the children of Democrats.
- (E) Parents who are independents are the least likely to have children who share their party identification.

34. One important change in political culture since the Second World War is that United States citizens have become

- (A) less trusting of governmental institutions and leaders
- (B) less likely to think of themselves as ideologically moderate
- (C) less likely to support civil rights
- (D) more likely to believe that their actions can influence government policy
- (E) more trusting of nongovernmental institutions and leaders

35. All of the following statements correctly describe judicial appointments at the federal level EXCEPT:
- (A) Congress nominates and confirms all appointments to the federal judiciary.
 - (B) Federal judicial appointments are sent for evaluation to the American Bar Association's Committee on the Federal Judiciary.
 - (C) If a senator is a member of the President's party, tradition may allow the senator to exercise an informal veto over an individual being considered from the senator's state.
 - (D) Presidents seldom recommend for judicial appointment individuals from the opposition political party.
 - (E) Federal judgeships are often considered by Presidents as patronage positions.
36. Which of the following agencies determines the domestic monetary policy of the United States?
- (A) The Council of Economic Advisors
 - (B) The United States Department of the Treasury
 - (C) The Office of Management and Budget
 - (D) The Federal Reserve Board
 - (E) The Export-Import Bank
37. Under which of the following conditions are interest groups most likely to influence policymaking?
- (A) When a problem has been dramatized by television network news
 - (B) When the President has made a major address on the subject
 - (C) When the parties in Congress have opposing positions on the issue
 - (D) When presidential candidates have been disagreeing with one another on the subject
 - (E) When the issue is a highly technical one requiring very detailed legislation
38. All of the following help to explain the President's difficulty in controlling cabinet-level agencies EXCEPT:
- (A) Agencies often have political support from interest groups.
 - (B) Agency staff often have information and technical expertise that the President and presidential advisers lack.
 - (C) The President cannot dismiss appointees after they have been confirmed by the Senate.
 - (D) Civil servants who remain in their jobs through changes of administration develop loyalties to their agencies.
 - (E) Congress is a competitor for influence over the bureaucracy.
39. In the Constitution as originally ratified in 1788, the provisions regarding which of the following most closely approximate popular, majoritarian democracy?
- (A) Election of members of the House of Representatives
 - (B) Election of members of the Senate
 - (C) Election of the President
 - (D) Ratification of treaties
 - (E) Confirmation of presidential appointments
40. The most likely and often the most powerful policy coalition of interests is likely to include a federal agency plus which of the following?
- (A) Related agencies in the bureaucracy and a congressional committee chairperson
 - (B) Congress and the President
 - (C) An interest group and the President
 - (D) An interest group and a congressional subcommittee
 - (E) An interest group and the majority party

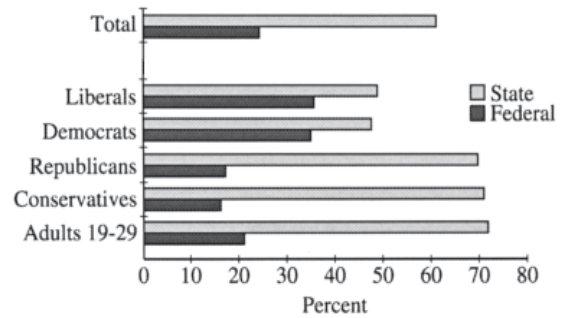
41. Throughout most of the twentieth century, which of the following was most likely to occur in midterm congressional elections?

- (A) The party of the President typically lost seats in Congress, regardless of whether the President was a Republican or a Democrat.
- (B) The party of the President typically gained seats in Congress, regardless of whether the President was a Republican or a Democrat.
- (C) The Democratic Party gained seats in Congress, whereas the Republican Party lost seats.
- (D) The Republican Party gained seats in Congress, whereas the Democratic Party lost seats.
- (E) Voter turnout was typically higher than in presidential elections.

42. Delegates to the Republican and Democratic national conventions are primarily chosen

- (A) by local party leaders
- (B) in primaries
- (C) in state caucuses
- (D) by members of Congress
- (E) by lottery

TRUST IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VERSUS YOUR OWN STATE GOVERNMENT TO DO A BETTER JOB RUNNING THINGS



Source: *Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University*, 1995.

43. The chart above supports which of the following statements?

- I. Both Republicans and Democrats have more trust in the federal government to do a better job than state governments.
- II. Most groups trust their own state governments more than the federal government.
- III. Democrats trust the federal government more than Republicans.
- IV. Liberals believe in big government.

- (A) I only
- (B) III only
- (C) II and III only
- (D) II and IV only
- (E) I, II, III, and IV

44. Which of the following political philosophers most influenced the writing of the United States Constitution?

- (A) Plato
- (B) Machiavelli
- (C) Locke
- (D) Rousseau
- (E) Marx

45. The concept of responsible party government emphasizes which of the following about elections?
- (A) Political parties will take positions similar to each other.
 - (B) Political parties will take clear, unambiguous positions.
 - (C) Voters will decide how to vote on the basis of how well the incumbent party satisfied them.
 - (D) Voters will vote mostly according to past identification.
 - (E) Special interest groups provide platforms and policy positions to political parties and their candidates.
46. Which of the following is a difference between the House of Representatives and the Senate?
- (A) Seniority is more important in the Senate than in the House.
 - (B) Leadership is more centralized in the Senate than in the House.
 - (C) The Senate has the exclusive power to ratify treaties.
 - (D) The Senate has more committees than does the House.
 - (E) The Senate may veto laws passed by the House, but the House may not veto senatorial legislation.
47. Which of the following was a consequence of the New Deal legislation passed during the Great Depression under the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt?
- (A) States gained additional powers to pass legislation to relieve the economic problems of the Depression.
 - (B) The federal government became a more important agent of change than in previous presidential administrations.
 - (C) New presidential appointments to federal courts limited the judicial powers of the Supreme Court.
 - (D) Social policy became the primary concern of state governments.
 - (E) Presidents have been much more likely to defend their creation of emergency acts by claiming executive privilege.
48. Congressional oversight is best described as
- (A) monitoring the federal bureaucracy
 - (B) monitoring the judicial branch and court rulings
 - (C) recommending and confirming federal judges
 - (D) regulating interstate commerce
 - (E) implementing public policy
49. The differences between the political attitudes of men and women are referred to as
- (A) the political gap
 - (B) the gender gap
 - (C) partisan politics
 - (D) party loyalty
 - (E) the median voter theory
50. According to the Constitution, which of the following decides the presidential election outcome in the event that a single candidate does not get a majority of electoral votes?
- (A) The Supreme Court
 - (B) The Senate
 - (C) The House of Representatives
 - (D) Both houses of Congress
 - (E) The sitting President
51. If the vice presidency of the United States is vacated, the Constitution stipulates that the President must
- (A) appoint a new Vice President with the approval of the House only
 - (B) appoint a new Vice President with the approval of the Senate only
 - (C) appoint a new Vice President with the approval of both houses of Congress
 - (D) instate the Speaker of the House as the new Vice President
 - (E) leave the vice presidency vacant for the remainder of the term of office

52. James Madison's goal of setting power against power to minimize the concentration of authority in any one branch of government is outlined in the Constitution as a system of
- (A) separation of powers
 - (B) checks and balances
 - (C) divided government
 - (D) national supremacy
 - (E) federalism
53. The declining number of marginal seats in Congress means that
- (A) fewer seats are won by 55% or less of the vote
 - (B) there are fewer minor committee assignments in Congress
 - (C) redistricting no longer affects elections
 - (D) members of third parties are more likely to be elected to Congress
 - (E) fewer minorities are elected to Congress
54. The ability of the media to influence how people interpret events, issues, and politicians is called
- (A) framing
 - (B) agenda setting
 - (C) investigative reporting
 - (D) minimal effects thesis
 - (E) adversarial journalism
55. The power of judicial review was established in
- (A) *McCulloch v. Maryland*
 - (B) *Gitlow v. New York*
 - (C) *Dandridge v. Williams*
 - (D) *Miranda v. Arizona*
 - (E) *Marbury v. Madison*

Study Resources

Most textbooks used in college-level American Government courses cover the topics in the outline given earlier, but the approaches to certain topics and the emphasis given to them may differ. To prepare for the American Government exam, it is advisable to study one or more college textbooks, which can be found in most college bookstores. When selecting a textbook, check the table of contents against the “Knowledge and Skills Required” for this test. The Internet is another resource you should explore. Supplemental reading will enrich your understanding of American politics.

Additional suggestions for preparing for CLEP exams are given in “Preparing to Take CLEP Examinations.”

Answer Key

1.	C	29.	C
2.	B	30.	D
3.	B	31.	A
4.	A	32.	B
5.	B	33.	B
6.	D	34.	A
7.	A	35.	A
8.	C	36.	D
9.	C	37.	E
10.	C	38.	C
11.	B	39.	A
12.	E	40.	D
13.	D	41.	A
14.	C	42.	B
15.	C	43.	C
16.	E	44.	C
17.	E	45.	B
18.	A	46.	C
19.	A	47.	B
20.	C	48.	A
21.	A	49.	B
22.	C	50.	C
23.	D	51.	C
24.	A	52.	B
25.	B	53.	A
26.	B	54.	B
27.	E	55.	E
28.	C		